

Death Threats Follow Brooklyn Man's Illegal Parking Complaints to 311 and the NYPD

By Jesse Coburn | Feb 9, 2022 | 64 COMMENTS



The illegally parked truck last week. Photo: Tony Melone

In retrospect, shoveling snow onto the hood of a pick-up truck blocking a Park Slope bus stop wasn't the best decision Tony Melone made last Monday. But that provocation seems quaint compared to what followed.

"I'm gonna kill you, Melone," an unidentified man told him over the phone an hour later — one of five threatening calls Melone would receive that day. "I'm gonna fuck you and your wife," a caller said later.

Nearly as unsettling to Melone as the threats was the question of how the caller, or callers, knew his name and phone number in the first place.

Melone had filed a 311 complaint to the NYPD earlier that day about the illegally parked truck and included his own name and number on the report. The city says it keeps that information confidential. Somehow it made its way to the furious caller.

“The 311 system is supposed to be a way for people to report problems,” Melone, 45, said later about the ordeal. “If it’s getting used to harass the people that are reporting the problems, that’s really disturbing.”

The episode fits into a broader pattern of harassment that New Yorkers have faced after filing 311 complaints to the NYPD, a pattern now [under city investigation](#) following a Streetsblog [report](#). But the calls received by Melone were by far the most extreme of any documented by Streetsblog, as they included death threats and violent and vulgar references to Melone’s wife and children, according to Melone, who shared recordings of the calls with Streetsblog.

The truck’s owner, who gave his name only as Don, said in an interview that he had not made the threatening calls and didn’t know who did. But he had little sympathy for Melone, whose shoveling, Don said, cracked his truck’s windshield.

“He deserves everything he gets. I think death threats is a bit extreme. But if he gets an ass-whooping, he gets an ass-whooping,” Don said. “I did nothing to offend him, nothing to harm him, nothing of the sort. Why would you sit down and do that to my vehicle?”

Spokespeople for the NYPD and 311 did not answer questions about whether any city officials shared Melone’s contact information with anyone after he filed his 311 report. 311 spokesman Bill Reda said: “Details of the complaint were sent directly to the local precinct for response.” The NYPD did not respond at all.

Melone’s 311 complaint on Jan. 31 was one of a dozen he’s filed about the gray Lincoln pick-up truck over the past year — all for parking illegally in front of bus stops and hydrants or on pedestrian islands around Ninth Street and Eighth Avenue. Police wrote tickets in response to two of those complaints, but took no action in response to most of the rest, city records show.

The truck seemed retrofitted to skirt accountability. Photos by Melone show a New York State Police Investigators Association sticker on the windshield, a sign reading FUNERAL on the dashboard, and four different temporary paper license plates — three from New Jersey and one from Minneapolis — borne by the truck over the course of a year.



How Streetsblog covered the 311 story.



Dashboard accoutrements. Photo: Tony Melone

But watching an old woman struggling over a snow bank to the sidewalk after getting off the B61 last Monday — because the truck was blocking the bus stop again — pushed Melone over the edge, he said.

After filing the 311 complaint, he went out to shovel out a new path for bus riders to the sidewalk — and threw snow onto the truck in the process.

“I had no intention of damaging the truck — didn’t think some snow could do that — but I did want to create an inconvenience for the driver who had inconvenienced so many bus riders,” Melone said.

Shortly after, Melone saw two police officers come to inspect the truck. Don came out of a nearby deli and spoke to them. The officers then left, and Don cleared the snow off his hood and drove away.

Then the phone calls began.

“I’m gonna kill you, Melone,” a caller told him several times 45-minutes later before hanging up, Melone said.

Less than an hour after that: “I’m gonna fuck you and your wife.”

Two hours later, according to Melone: “I saw you had the cops come. I’m gonna hurt you.”

Five minutes later, in a call Melone recorded: “I’m going to kill you, I’m going to kill you.”

Finally, shortly after 5 p.m., a voicemail: “Don’t think I forgot about you. I’m going to fuck the shit out of you when I get a chance. You and your fucking wife. And if you keep them little sloppy sexy little kids around I’m going to get them too, you son of a bitch.”

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(A recording of this voicemail is below. Warning: it is explicit.)



All of the calls came from a blocked number.

Melone called the police after the second call, and two other officers arrived at his apartment. But they said there was little they could do about the threats, according to Melone, and recommended that he file another 311 complaint if he saw the truck illegally parked.

Steve Vaccaro, an attorney in Manhattan, said death threats could constitute criminal harassment, and the disclosure of someone's private information by a public official to a third party would likely be illegal, too.

"That is really incendiary, that's really provocative," Vaccaro said. It would be "a serious violation of confidential information."



Tony Melone. Photo: Jesse Coburn

[The 311 privacy policy](#) states the city is "committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the information provided by clients."

Dianne Struzzi, a spokeswoman for the Department of Investigation, called the incident "concerning" and said the department's investigation into the 311 harassment allegations is active. She encouraged anyone who received similar calls or messages after filing 311 reports to contact DOI at (212) 825-5967.

Don, 38, of Queens, said he'd been tipped off prior to last week's episode that Melone had filed 311 complaints about his truck and posted about it on Twitter. Don wouldn't say who informed him of this, saying only, "I have people in higher places as well."

Don defended his illegal parking. He only stops in the bus stop briefly, the stop isn't especially crowded, and he's usually there early in the day when it isn't busy, he said. In any case, it isn't Melone's job to enforce parking regulations, he said.

"He should've allowed the police to be police, not him sit down and go do things in his own hands," Don said. "This is not Georgia."

Don said he plans to file a police report against Melone over the broken windshield.

Tony, for his part, lays the blame for the whole episode on the NYPD.

"None of this had to happen if they had just enforced basic parking rules," he said.

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By Jesse Coburn | Feb 10, 2022

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By Julianne Cuba | Oct 19, 2021

"Keep fucking around," the new harasser texted.

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By Brad Aaron | Jun 10, 2014

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By Jesse Coburn | Oct 21, 2021

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Tipster Sues NYPD for Harassment Over 311 Complaints about Illegal Parking

By Julianne Cuba | Jan 23, 2023

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